

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

5 METHODS AND APPARATUS TO SUPPORT ACQUISITION OF DATA

A controller in a computer communicates with multiple data acquisition nodes over a network connection. The controller plugs into a personal computer device that processes received data and generates commands over a network cable extending from
10 the controller to a first data acquisition node. The first data acquisition node couples, via a network cable, to a second data acquisition node. The second data acquisition node optionally couples to yet other data acquisition nodes, and so on in a daisy-chain fashion. Each data acquisition node includes one or more interfaces to corresponding input/output devices associated with the data acquisition node. Based on the interconnection of the
15 controller and the data acquisition nodes, the controller accesses data collected by the data acquisition nodes from corresponding input devices and additionally controls output devices coupled to the data acquisition nodes.